composed to announce to the ancestors the achievements of the monarch. The power of the Chou *Wang* had begun to decline. The Kingdom, as we have suggested, had long been divided into principalities. Some of these were ruled by collateral branches of the royal house, others by descendants of ministers and generals who had been rewarded for service to the state by hereditary fiefs, and still others by families who claimed to trace their lineage from the rulers of preceding dynasties. Probably several of the princes were extending their boundaries at the expense of the adjoining non-Chinese peoples and so were enlarging the borders of China. Weak monarchs, inevitable in any hereditary line, found difficulty in asserting their authority over powerful vassals, and privileges once conceded proved obstacles to the resumption of the power of the central government by the occasional vigorous *Wang.* Hsiian Wang, the traditional dates of whose reign are B.C. 827-781, was apparently abler than some of his immediate predecessors. Certainly he was strong enough to fight successfully against the barbarians in the modern Shansi and Northern Shensi, carrying the war into the highlands from which these enemies menaced the prosperous plains. He also invaded the valley of the Han. Such aggressiveness outside his boundaries would seem to imply that he had made progress against his own insubordinate lords.

Hsiian Wang, however, only postponed the decay of his line. His successor, Yu Wang, is declared by tradition to have been hopelessly weak and to have sacrificed the state in the attempt to satisfy the whim of a court beauty. He put her in place of his queen and disinherited the latter's son, the heir presumptive. To

make her smile, so the story runs, he had the beacon fires kindled which were the signal for his vassals to rally against a raid of barbarians. When the fires were lit in earnest, the lords, fearing another practical joke, failed to respond against a joint attack of the invaders and the outraged father of the deposed queen. Yu Wang was killed and his unpopular mistress taken captive. At the beginning of the next reign, traditional dates of which are B.C. 771-720, the weakness of the Chou was openly proclaimed to the world when the capital was moved from the valley of the Wei, where it was subject to the forays of the barbarians, eastward to Loyang, near the present Honanfy; «aore remote from the danger-